

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

----- 126698

R 121538Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8198

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: TORIES RALLY BEHIND NEW LEADER

REF: LONDON 2131

1. SUMMARY. MARGARET THATCHER HAS WON A REMARKABLE PERSONAL VICTORY, AND THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS QUICKLY CLOSING RANKS BEHIND ITS NEW LEADER. AGGRESSIVE AND ABLE, SHE IS EXPECTED TO REVITALIZE THE PARTY ORGANIZATION, BRING FRESH YOUNGER BLOOD INTO THE SHADOW CABINET AND MOUNT A VIGOROUS ASSAULT ON THE GOVERNMENT IN THE COMMONS. IF SHE IS EVER TO BECOME BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN

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PRIME MINISTER, HOWEVER, SHE WILL HAVE TO HUMANIZE HER

PERSONAL IMAGE AND BROADEN HER IDEOLOGICAL BASE. END
SUMMARY

2. IN THE WAKE OF MARGARET THATCHER'S DECISIVE SECOND BALLOT VICTORY YESTERDAY (FEBRUARY 11), THE TORY PARTY IS QUICKLY CLOSING RANKS BEHIND ITS NEW LEADER. TED HEATH, THE MAN SHE DEPOSED, AND HER FOUR RIVAL CANDIDATES HAVE ALL SENT MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATION AND PLEDGES OF SUPPORT, AND SHE IN TURN HAS ASKED THE SHADOW CABINET TO CARRY ON FOR THE TIME BEING. SHE HAS SAID SHE WILL ASK HEATH TO SERVE ON HER TEAM, BUT IT IS THOUGHT LIKELY HE WILL PREFER TO REMAIN ON THE BACK BENCHES, AT LEAST FOR AWHILE. THE OTHER CONTENDERS, HOWEVER, HAVE ALL INDICATED A READINESS TO SERVE IN THE NEW SHADOW CABINET.

3. AS THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY NOW BEGINS TO TAKE STOCK, ITS MOOD IS A CURIOUS MIXTURE OF RELIEF, EXCITEMENT, GUILT, AND MISGIVINGS. RELIEF THAT THE PROLONGED AND COMPLICATED ELECTORAL PROCESS WITH ALL ITS ATTENDANT HIJINKS IS FINALLY OVER. EXCITEMENT AT THE PROSPECT OF A NEW, DYNAMIC BRAND OF LEADERSHIP. RESIDUAL GUILT OVER THE UNGRATEFUL DISPATCH OF TED HEATH. AND MISGIVINGS THAT THE CANDIDATE MOST POPULAR WITH TRUE-BLUE TORIES MAY NOT PROVE ALL THAT POPULAR WITH THE ELECTORATE.

4. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ANALYZE WITH ANY PRECISION WHY THE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP RACE ENDED AS IT DID -- MAINLY BECAUSE SO MANY INDIVIDUAL MPS WERE BESET BY DOUBTS AND RESERVATIONS AND EVENTUALLY CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR AN ODD MIXTURE OF REASONS. THEIR MOTIVATIONS IN DUMPING HEATH WERE AN ACCUMULATION OF IDEOLOGICAL RESENTMENT FROM RIGHT-WING TORIES, PERSONAL GRIEVANCE BY THOSE WHO HAD SUFFERED UNDER HIS ARROGANT AND IMPERIOUS MANNER, AND COLD CALCULATION THAT HEATH HAD GAMBLED, LOST, AND HAD TO PAY. THE DECISION TO REMOVE HIM WAS TAKEN IN THE FACE OF WIDESPREAD EVIDENCE THAT THE PARTY WORKERS AT

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

----- 126834

R 121538Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8199
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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LARGE STILL SUPPORTED HIM.

5. THE COLLECTIVE MOTIVATIONS OF CONSERVATIVE MPS TO
INSTALL MRS. THATCHER IN HEATH'S PLACE ARE NO LESS MIXED.
FOR RIGHT-WING TORIES, HER PRAISE OF FREE ENTERPRISE,
HARD WORK, AND OLD CONSERVATIVE VALUES COMMENDED HER
GREATLY, BUT THEIR VOTES ALONE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DE-
CISIVE. THE CRITICAL FACTOR FOR MANY OTHER MPS WAS THE
DESIRE TO HAVE AN AGGRESSIVE, HARD-HITTING LEADER IN THE
COMMONS, AND ON THAT SCORE, WILLIE WHITEHEAD DIDN'T FILL
THE BILL. FINALLY, OF COURSE, SOME MPS WEREN'T PARTI-
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CULARLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ANY OF THE CANDIDATES AND
SIMPLY WANTED TO PUT AN END TO WHAT THEY REGARDED AS AN
UNSEEMLY CAMPAIGN.

6. THAT SAID, HOWEVER, THERE ARE FEW WHO WOULD DISPARAGE
MARGARET THATCHER'S REMARKABLE PERSONAL TRIUMPH. THE
FIRST WOMAN TO LEAD A POLITICAL PARTY IN BRITAIN, SHE IS
ABLE, INTELLIGENT, ARTICULATE, HARD-WORKING, AND CLEARLY
READY TO TAKE CHARGE. SHE WILL BRING BADLY NEEDED FRESH
BLOOD INTO THE SHADOW CABINET, AND REVITALIZE A DEMORA-
LIZED PARTY. A FORMIDABLE DEBATER, SHE WILL RALLY HER

BACKBENCHERS AND HARRY THE GOVERNMENT WITH VIGOR.

7. IF, HOWEVER, SHE IS TO DO MORE THAN DELIGHT TORY HEARTS, IF SHE IS EVER TO BECOME BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN PRIME MINISTER, SHE WILL HAVE TO BROADEN HER POPULAR APPEAL. HER VOICE, HER DRESS, HER MANNER ALL BEAR THE UNMISTAKEABLE STAMP OF THE SUBURBAN TORY MATRON. IN THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WON LESS THAN 36 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE. TO EXPAND THAT NARROW BASE, SHE WILL HAVE TO ADOPT MORE PROGRESSIVE POLICIES THAN THOSE CURRENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH HER, TO OVERCOME HER IMAGE AS THATCHER THE MILK SNATCHER, THE EDUCATION MINISTER WHO ABOLISHED FREE MILK FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN, AND TO DEMONSTRATE THAT SHE IS COMPASSIONATE AND CONCERNED ABOUT PEOPLE AS WELL AS ISSUES. IT WAS SAID OF TED HEATH THAT HE WAS TREMENDOUSLY ABLE AND THAT HE INSPIRED RESPECT, BUT LITTLE AFFECTION. MUTATIS MUTANDIS, MUCH THE SAME IS TRUE OF MARGARET THATCHER.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTIONS, PARTY LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON02201
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750051-0162
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750251/aaaabtdh.tel
Line Count: 189
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 2131
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 APR 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <15 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TORIES RALLY BEHIND NEW LEADER
TAGS: PINT, UK, (THATCHER, MARGARET)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006